

A Warrior's Second Chance

Chapter 4

FAYE Just like that, it was decided. My fate was sealed. Images kept flashing in my head of Jason and Sage, tangled together in the bed meant for me. My mate. My sister. And now, here I was, about to be handed over to a man I barely knew, just to keep peace between the packs. Alpha Wells's voice broke through my thoughts. "Very well then. We should begin. The guests are waiting." My chest tightened, but I forced myself to nod. "Of course," I whispered, but my voice sounded dull, like it belonged to someone else. Alexander didn't say a word. He just watched me with those cold gray eyes. I didn't want to look at him, but my gaze kept drifting back, searching for something — anything — behind that stone expression. But there was nothing. They led us outside to the sacred grounds behind the pack house. It was obvious this was rushed, nothing like the ceremony I'd once dreamed of. Guests stood in a wide circle, whispering. Some looked at me with pity; most just watched with curiosity. The elders stood by the altar, a low stone table covered in white cloth. The ceremonial dagger lay on top, and just the sight of it twisted my stomach. Alexander stepped closer. His face stayed hard, colder than before, and again I wondered why. "Are you ready?" he asked coldly. "No," I wanted to say. But all that came out was, "Let's get it over with." He nodded. Elder John raised his hands, quieting the crowd. "Tonight, under the eyes of the moon and our ancestors, we bind Alpha Alexander of Blood Crescent and Delta Faye of Silver Hollow. This bond keeps peace and strengthens the ties between our packs." His words sounded distant, like they weren't meant for me. All I could hear was Sage's voice in my head, "Why shouldn't it be me for once?" And Jason's empty stare when he looked at me. My chest felt so heavy I could barely breathe. "Faye," Elder John called. "Step forward." I forced myself to step up, keeping my shoulders straight, even though every part of me wanted to run. Alexander took the dagger first. Without hesitation, he drew it across his palm, drawing blood, then he handed it to me. My hand trembled, but I tightened my grip. The cut stung, but compared to the betrayal I'd felt tonight, it was nothing. We pressed our palms

together and our blood mixed and dripped onto the dagger. "From this night, you are bound," Elder John declared. "In strength, in duty, and under the moon." Polite applause rose around us, but I barely heard it. My heart felt like it was locked behind a wall I didn't even know I'd built, one Jason and Sage had helped me build tonight. I'd loved Jason once, trusted him completely, and he'd crushed that trust like it was nothing. I'd never let anyone have that power again. Not Alexander. Not anyone. Alexander leaned closer, his breath brushing my cheek. "Now say the vow," he murmured. I swallowed hard. "I, Delta Faye of Silver Hollow, bind myself to you in duty and alliance." His eyes stayed cold as he spoke. "I, Alpha Alexander of Blood Crescent, bind myself to you as mate and Luna of my pack." His words were flat, like he was reciting them for duty, not choice. Elder John stepped forward with a silver goblet. "Drink, and seal the bond." We each took a sip. It tasted bitter and metallic, but I forced it down. The elder lifted his staff. "By moon and blood, it is done." A soft cheer sounded through the guests. My mother wiped tears from her eyes, trying to smile. My father's face was carved with guilt and worry. Behind them, I caught sight of Sage beside Jason, and I turned away before the anger bubbling in my chest could spill out in front of everyone. Alexander stepped back to speak quietly with Alpha Wells and my father. The guests began drifting away, stealing glances at me as they left. I stood there, feeling nothing but cold inside. Everything hurt so much that it felt easier not to feel at all. I didn't hear Sage approach until she was standing beside me. "Faye," she started softly. I turned to face her. Her eyes were wet, but her chin stayed lifted, like always. "I wanted to say... I'm sorry you found out that way," she whispered. "Jason and I didn't plan it like that." Her words sounded empty. "So you're sorry I caught you," I said quietly. "Not sorry you did it." "That's not fair," Sage snapped, her voice rising a little. "You don't understand—" "I do," I cut her off. "You wanted him, so you took him. And you didn't care what it did to me." She looked away, then back. "You always had everything, Faye. You got to choose Jason. I was promised to a man I'd never met. Do you know what that felt like?" "And do you know what this feels like?" My voice shook despite how hard I tried to hold it steady. "To see my own sister with my mate? On the night meant for us?" She flinched but didn't step back. "You'll survive, Faye. You're always the strong one."

Aren't you?" She paused, sighing. "I didn't come to fight. I don't want us to hate each other. We're still sisters." I stared at her, anger mixing with the hurt inside of me. "You chose him over me, Sage. Don't act like nothing's changed. You made your choice. Now let me make mine." Her eyes narrowed. "So you'll hate me forever? Just because this time I refused to stand behind you?" "I'm tired, Sage," I said truthfully. "I can't do this right now." Something hardened in her gaze. "Fine," she said. "But don't act innocent, Faye. You were willing to let me marry a stranger so you could keep Jason. At least I fought for what I wanted." My jaw clenched. "You didn't fight, Sage. You lied. You betrayed." She scoffed. "You still get to be Luna! You're still getting what you want!" I took a slow breath. "I hope you're happy," I said softly. "You got what you wanted. I hope it's worth it." Bitterness flickered over her face. "Maybe now you'll see you can't always have everything, Faye. I deserve good things too." I shook my head. "We're done here, Sage." Without waiting for her answer, I turned and walked away. My chest burned, but I kept moving. I didn't look back. Not this time. I couldn't change the past. But I could decide what parts of me I'd never give away again. Jason and Sage had taught me that love could be broken in a moment. Now, I'd build a wall around my heart so no one could hurt me again. Not even Alexander.